

Parasha Meditation Emor

Vayikra 21:1-24:23

By Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Healing Emotions through Speech

Introduction:

How do we heal our Emotions through Speech?

This week's *parasha* is called "*Emor*" which means "say." *Parashat Emor* is juxtaposed to *Parashat Kedoshim* – "holiness," because the word "*emor*" infuses the Kohanim and the Israelites with the superior holiness of keeping the Divine word. One of the students in my recent online *EmunaHealing* seminar asked the following question: "Please elaborate on what you mentioned, that we have the ability to heal our emotions through speech. How do we do that?"

Speech is Life

Speech is the way we express ourselves as human beings. At our original creation in the Garden of Eden, "G*d blew His living soul into Adam's nostrils, and he became a living spirit."¹ The *Targum*² translates "living spirit" as "speaking spirit." True life and vitality of the human being is expressed specifically through speech.

Holiness, Life & Sanctification of Speech

The connection between ultimate life and speech is alluded to at the beginning of *Parashat Emor*,³ which instructs the Kohanim to be extra careful not to become impure, because of their special holy status as servants in G*d's sanctuary.⁴ In the Torah, holiness is linked to life and vitality, as opposed to death and necromancy. This is why *Parashat Kedoshim* concludes with the prohibition to be a medium for doing witchcraft through the dead,⁵ while *Parashat Emor* opens with the prohibition for the Kohanim to become impure by having contact with the dead. From here, we may conclude that holiness and sanctification of speech is connected with life. This principle is confirmed by the end of *Parashat Emor*, describing how ultimate misuse of speech results in death. Our *parasha* goes into length to tell the story of the son of Shelomit bat Dibri who blasphemed and cursed G*d with his speech, and was publically put to death.⁶

¹ Bereishit 2:7.

² Both *Targum Onkelos* and *Targum Yonatan* on Bereishit 2:7.

³ Vayikra 21:1.

⁴ Vayikra 21:7.

⁵ Vayikra 20:27.

⁶ Vayikra 24:10-16.



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Healing Emotions through Speech

Going back to our original question, how to heal emotions through speech, we can now understand that the choice of our words and the way we express ourselves in speech both influences and is an expression of the quality of our vitality. While death is stiff and stagnant, that which is alive flows, moves and changes. Therefore, our emotions, which also are expressions of our life and vitality, are called “e-motions” in English, linking emotions with the motion and movement of life. Kabbalah teaches us that the three main parts of our soul – *neshamah*, (intellectual soul), *ruach*, (emotional soul) and *nefesh* (the most physical soul) – correspond respectively to the three garments of our soul: thought, speech and action.⁷ The *ruach* corresponds to speech, because we express our emotions through speech. Our emotions are also an expression of our vitality. The amount of life that we radiate corresponds to the extent that we are able to express the emotion of love. Anger, jealousy and depression are examples of emotional blockages that block the Divine life-force from manifesting within us. Through speech we have the ability to rectify our emotions, and thus learn to become more and more truly alive. Ramban, in his famous letter,⁸ instructs us: “Speak gently at all times.” This will help us overcome negative emotions such as pride and anger. When we always speak gently, without ever raising our voice, it becomes virtually impossible to be angry.

The Connection between Speech and *Emunah*

In addition to the intonation, our choices of whom to speak with and what to speak about, as well as the words we choose, also have the ability to elevate our emotions. Constantly expressing words of praise for Hashem and appreciation for our fellows help ingrain within us the emotion of gratitude. Gratitude engenders happiness and acceptance, which again raise our spirits, emotions and vitality. David *HaMelech* (King David) extols: “I have faith for I speak.”⁹ Through speaking words of *emunah* (faith), we have the ability to strengthen the *emunah* in our hearts. Nachum Ish Gam Zu of the Talmud suffered much in life, but nevertheless he would always respond to every difficulty with: “*gam zu letovah* – this too is for the good.”¹⁰ By accustoming ourselves to face difficulties with words of faith and acceptance, we gradually build our *emunah*, happiness, and vitality.

Fire, Water and Air – The Elements of Speech

אמר – “*Emor*” – the name of his week’s *parasha* consists of the three letters: א – “*alef*,” מ – “*mem*,” and ר – “*reish*.” These three letters are the acronym for the three main elements: אש – *aish* – fire, מים – *mayim* – water, and רוח – *ruach* – air.¹¹ These elements are the expression of our emotions. Through “fire” we can either express the negative emotion of anger, or elevate it into passion and excitement for the Torah. Through “water” we can either be filled with pleasure-seeking, or become calm like the cool soft waves of a lake on a sunny day. The element of “air” can make us nervous, or help us rise upwards, in our yearning to increase spirituality and holiness in our life.

⁷ See for example, the Rama of Pa’no, *Article about the Soul*, Part 4, Chapter 4.

⁸ *Igeret HaRamban*, written to his elder son, Nachman, with the instruction to read it weekly.

⁹ *Tehillim* 116:10.

¹⁰ *Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit* 21a.

¹¹ Rav Tzvi Elimelech Shapiro*, *Agra d’Kala*, page 300/51 and many other Kabbalistic and Chassidic writings. The element of עפר – *afar* – “earth” consists of a fusion of the main three elements.

Summary of Practical Tips to Heal our Emotions through Speech

1. Overcome pride and anger by speaking gently without raising your voice.
2. Develop gratitude by expressing words of praise to Hashem and appreciation for people.
3. Whenever you face difficulties accustom yourself to say: "*gam zu l'tova*" – this too is for the good.
4. Work on making yourself happy by choosing to speak about positive uplifting matters.

Meditation:

Make yourself comfortable in your chair or cushion. Close your eyes and become aware of your breath.

1. Your breath is the expression of your *ruach* – air. Place your hands on your stomach, and note how you can fill your belly with clean fresh air as you inhale, and empty it as you exhale. Repeat this calming breathing several times before moving your hands to your chest.
2. Get in touch with how your chest rises and falls, as you fill it with air through your inhalation and deflate it as you exhale.
3. With your hands on your throat, feel how the air is passing through your esophagus, as you slowly breathe in and out.
4. Repeat the entire sequence of three breaths each to your belly, chest and throat, as you imagine the Hebrew letters that spell the word *רוח* – *ruach* – air. Feel how the entire cavity within you aspires towards spirituality and holiness, as you take in Hashem's life-giving air.
5. Continue to breathe calmly, as you imagine yourself dipping your feet in the calm sea on a hot summer day. Feel how the soothing, cooling water softens your skin.
6. Allow yourself to truly relax and become enveloped by the calming softness of the gentle waves. You may imagine yourself deliciously floating as all worries and fears melt away. Allow the waters to penetrate any tension you may carry in your body, until each tension dissolves in the sea.
7. Continue imagining yourself calming down in the water, letting go of all your worries, as you visualize the Hebrew letters that spell the word *מים* – *mayim* – water.
8. Keep breathing calmly and ease yourself of fears and tensions through the tranquil water, as you imagine the flames of the Shabbat candles. Try to visualize its blue core turning into a yellow, orange and red glow.
9. Allow the radiating flame to etch itself into your heart, burning away the indifferent, lazy, and complacent barrier surrounding your vibrant, beating heart. Take your time to very

slowly burn away each part of the blockage, as your imaginary flame touches the circumference of your heart.

10. Visualize the Hebrew letters that spell the word **אֵשׁ** – *aish* – fire, as you unearth and get in touch with your inner flame. Allow this flame to fill your entire being with bright, exhilarating, and warming light. As the flame dances within you, imagine yourself dancing with delight, while your entire being is engaged in a particular mitzvah of your choice.

11. Take several deep breaths and notice if you feel more in tune with the elements of your emotions.

Notes:

The root **אמר** appears three times in the opening verse of *Parashat Emor*: “Hashem **said** (וַיֹּאמֶר) to Moshe, ‘**Say** (אָמַר) to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and **say** (וְאָמַרְתָּ) to them...”¹² This verse is written in a different style of language than the rest of the Torah. Throughout the Torah and even in the continuation of *Parashat Emor*, the beginning of every command is written in the following style: “Hashem spoke (וַיְדַבֵּר) – *vayedaber* – to Moshe saying, (לְאֹמַר) – *l’emor*, –“speak” (דַּבֵּר) – *daber* unto...”¹³ Here the root **דבר** – *diber* is mentioned twice while the root **אמר** – *amar* is mentioned only once. The triple repetition of the word **אמר** in the opening verse of *Parashat Emor* may possibly allude to the three elements (fire, water, and air) that we need to elevate through sanctification of life and speech. Both life and speech characterize this week’s *parasha*, beginning by prohibiting the Kohanim from contact with the dead, and concluding in the defilement of speech by the son of Shelomit bat Dibri. It is also interesting to note that specifically the root **אמר** is used in the Ten Utterances with which Hashem created the world.¹⁴ Originally, light and life came into being by Hashem’s word **אמר**. Likewise we have the ability to emulate Hashem and create life with our words. **אָבְרָא קְאֹדַבְרָה** – “*Abra k’adabra*” – “*I will create as I speak!*”

¹² *Vayikra* 21:1.

¹³ *Vayikra* 21:17, I found this style written in the Torah written 41 times in the Torah.

¹⁴ See chapter one of *Bereishit* where Hashem created the world in six days through His speech, described by the Hebrew root **אמר**.

About Us



Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Chana Bracha also began her practice as a spiritual healer through Emuna, tefila and energy work. For more than two decades Chana Bracha has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States. She creates curricula emphasizing women's

spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values. Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin located in the Judean Hills of Israel offers a unique program to women of all ages and backgrounds to learn in a holistic Torah study environment that nurtures the mind, body and soul. Intensive textual study of Tanach, Halacha and Chassidut are woven together with creative spiritual expression, and connection with the land of Israel through organic gardening, herbology, Jewish sources of healing and sustainable living. Classes in Jewish mysticism, Chassidism and Jewish meditation are directed at the spiritual thirst so prominent in our times.

*In 2010 Rebbetzin Chana Bracha published her first book, *Women at the Crossroads: A Woman's Perspective on the Weekly Torah Portion*.*

Chana Bracha has a married son and several granddaughters. She lives with her husband and younger son on the land of the Judean hills, Israel.

If you are interested in:

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or visit her blog: <http://rebbetzinchanabracha.blogspot.com/2010/11/emunah-healing-for-women.html>

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